

Chapter 6: Idolatry is an Illogical Creed

Honestly speaking, what rational or narrated proof did idolaters have for their creed? It can be gathered from Qur'anic verses that they did not have any proof for their beliefs, whether in the realm of ideology or in the domain of rituals. In brief, it can be said that idolatry is a man-made religion which is based on conjecture and delusion and is not founded on any heavenly book and/or rational proof. We will adduce certain Qur'anic verses in order to clarify this claim:

First verse:

“How could I fear what you ascribe [to Him] as [His] partners, when you do not fear ascribing to Allah partners for which He has not sent down any authority to you? So [tell me,] which of the two sides has a greater right to safety, if you know.”¹

Idolaters used to intimidate prophets (‘a) saying that idols would most likely harm them and be wrathful towards them.

Second verse:

“They make the jinn partners of Allah, though He has created them, and carve out sons and daughters for Him, without any knowledge. Immaculate is He and exalted above what they allege [concerning Him]!”²

It can easily be inferred from this verse that idolatrous beliefs were not based on any certain knowledge but were merely founded on a series of illusions and fantasies.

Third verse:

“They dedicate to Allah out of what He has created of the crops and cattle a portion, and say, ‘This is for Allah.’ So, do they maintain, and this is for our partners. But what is for their partners does not reach Allah, and what is for Allah reaches their partners. Evil is the judgment that they

make. ³

Allah mentions one of the idolatrous rituals, which is apportioning their yield from animal and crop husbandry between Allah and idols, and states that this belief was based on the delusions and fantasies of idolaters and that it was a belief devoid of any convincing proof.

Fourth verse:

“That is how to most of the polytheists is presented as decorous the slaying of their children by those whom they ascribe as partners [to Allah], and confound their religion for them. Had Allah wished, they would not have done it. So, leave them with what they fabricate.” ⁴

This verse indicates that idolatrous deeds were delusory and devoid of any proof.

Fifth verse:

“And they say, ‘These cattle and tillage are a taboo: none may eat them except whom we please,’ So, they maintain, and there are cattle whose backs are forbidden and cattle over which they do not mention Allah’s Name, fabricating a lie against Him. Soon, He will requite them for what they used to fabricate.” ⁵

The above quoted verse shows that such kinds of practices were utter lies which idolaters had concocted against Allah.

Sixth verse:

“And they say, ‘That which is in the bellies of these cattle is exclusively for our males and forbidden to our wives. But if it is still-born, they will share it.’ Soon, He will requite them for their allegations. Indeed, He is All-wise, All-knowing.” ⁶

This verse also indicates that such practices were a result of the fantasies and delusions of idolaters, and not based on any authoritative proof.

Seventh verse:

“They are certainly losers who slay their children foolishly without knowledge, and forbid what Allah has provided them, fabricating a lie against Allah. Certainly, they have gone astray and are not guided.” ⁷

[Eighth verse:](#)

“Eight mates: two of sheep, and two of goats. Say, ‘Is it the two males that He has forbidden, or the two females, or what is contained in the wombs of the two females? Inform me with knowledge, should you be truthful.’ And two of camels and two of oxen. Say, ‘Is it the two males that He has forbidden or the two females, or what is contained in the wombs of the two females? Were you witnesses when Allah enjoined this upon you?’ So who is a greater wrongdoer than him who fabricates a lie against Allah to mislead the people without any knowledge? Indeed, Allah does not guide the wrongdoing lot.”⁸

This verse, especially the part which says, “Were you witnesses when Allah enjoined this upon you? So, who is a greater wrongdoer than him who fabricates a lie against Allah to mislead the people without any knowledge”, also clearly proves that idolatrous practices were not based on any kind of authoritative proof.

[Ninth verse:](#)

“The polytheists will say, ‘Had Allah wished, we would not have ascribed any partner [to Him], nor our fathers, nor would we have forbidden anything.’ Those who were before them had denied⁹ likewise until they tasted Our punishment. Say, ‘Do you have any [revealed] knowledge that you can produce before us? You follow nothing but conjectures, and you do nothing but surmise.’ Say, ‘To Allah belongs the conclusive argument. Had He wished, He would have surely guided you all.’ Say, ‘Bring your witnesses who may testify that Allah has forbidden this.’ So, if they testify, do not testify with them, and do not follow the desires of those who deny Our signs, and those who do not believe in the Hereafter and equate [others] with their Lord.”¹⁰

Sections of these verses hint at the absurdity and preposterousness of idolatrous beliefs:

1. “Say, ‘Do you have any [revealed] knowledge that you can produce before us?’”
2. “You follow nothing but conjectures.”
3. “And you do nothing but surmise.”
4. “To Allah belongs the conclusive argument.”
5. “Bring your witnesses who may testify that Allah has forbidden this...”

Note: Some people have sought to claim that idolatry was a religion of fatalism and determinism by adducing verse 148, but this claim is not correct because these verses do not prove their claim.

However, the outward meaning of the verse is that idolaters used to claim that they had Divine proof to ascertain their creed. Allah has nullified this claim.

Tenth verse:

“Say, ‘Tell me about what you invoke besides Allah. Show me what [part] of the earth they have created. Do they have any share in the heavens? Bring me a scripture [revealed] before this, or some vestige of [Divine] knowledge, should you be truthful?’”¹¹

Eleventh verse:

“They worship besides Allah that for which He has not sent down any authority, and of which they have no knowledge. And the wrongdoers shall have no help.”¹²

Twelfth verse:

“Whoever invokes besides Allah another god of which he has no proof, his reckoning will indeed rest with his Lord. Indeed, the faithless will not be felicitous.”¹³

Thirteenth verse:

“They say, ‘Had the All-beneficent wished, we would not have worshipped.’¹⁴ They do not have any knowledge of that, and they do nothing but surmise. Did We give them a Book before this, so that they are holding fast to it? Rather, they say, ‘We found our fathers following a creed, and we are indeed guided in their footsteps.’ And so it has been that We did not send any warner to a town before you, without its affluent ones saying, ‘We found our fathers following a creed and we are indeed following in their footsteps.’ He would say, ‘What! Even if I bring you a better guidance than what you found your fathers following?’ They would say, ‘We indeed disbelieve in what you are sent with’.”¹⁵

It can be deduced from this verse that polytheists had blindly followed their forefathers and adopted idolatry and had no logical proof for their creed.

Fourteenth verse:

“Say, ‘My Lord has only forbidden indecencies, the outward among them and the inward ones, and sin and undue aggression, and that you should ascribe to Allah partners for which He has not sent down any authority, and that you should attribute to Allah what you do not know.’”¹⁶

Fifteenth verse:

“He said, ‘There has become due against you a punishment and wrath from your Lord. Do you dispute with me regarding names which you have named—you and your fathers—for which Allah

*has not sent down any authority? So wait! I too am waiting along with you’.*¹⁷

Is idolatry a reality or a delusion?

It has become clear from previous discussions that idolatry is nothing but a series of delusions, and that it is not based on any rational and narrated proof. The Holy Qur’an has sometimes called idolatry ‘fantasies’ [za‘m] and has at times called it ‘conjecture’ [zann]. To illustrate this, we will quote a number of verses:

First verse:

*“On the Day when We will gather them all together, We shall say to those who ascribed partners [to Allah], ‘Where are your partners that you used to claim?’ Then their only excuse will be to say, ‘By Allah, our Lord, we were not polytheists.’ Look, how they forswear themselves, and what they used to fabricate has forsaken them!”*¹⁸

Second verse:

*“The Day He will call out to them and say, ‘Where are my partners that you used to claim?’”*¹⁹

Third verse:

*“Most of them just follow conjecture; indeed, conjecture is no substitute for the truth. Indeed, Allah knows best what they do.”*²⁰

Verses preceding this verse concern polytheists, to whom refers the pronoun ‘most of them’ in the above quoted verse.

Fourth verse:

*“Look! To Allah indeed belongs whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth. And what do they pursue who invoke partners besides Allah? They merely follow conjectures and they just make surmises.”*²¹

There are many verses in the Holy Qur’an on this subject, but these few verses suffice to illustrate the delusory nature of idolatry.

Yes, a person who is entangled in delusions believes a lot of his fantasies; he imagines that Allah is like His creatures, and conjectures that Allah has off-springs, a spouse and limbs like the creatures He has created. A person who is deluded ought to be awakened so that he may conceive reality. It is for this reason that when idolaters were faced with danger and destruction, they used to awaken from their illusions and turn to their primordial natures.

The monotheism of polytheists in crises

Polytheists used to live in fantasy, and only used to turn to their natural inclinations when critical moments arose and used to conceive that only Allah is effective and that none besides Him is capable of doing anything. Crises used to awaken them from their slumber, but unfortunately, they used to get entangled in their delusions once critical circumstances were gotten rid of and life once more came back to normal. There are a number of verses in the Holy Qur'an which illustrate this issue:

First verse:

“Say, ‘Tell me, should Allah’s punishment overtake you, or should the Hour overtake you, will you supplicate anyone other than Allah, should you be truthful? Rather, Him you will supplicate, and He will remove that for which you supplicated Him, if He wishes, and you will forget what you ascribe [to Him] as [His] partners’.”²²

This verse denotes that all idols get forgotten in crises and all idolaters, on the demand of their primordial natures, ask Allah to solve their problems.

Second verse:

“Say, ‘Who delivers you from the darkness of land and sea, [when] you invoke Him suppliantly and secretly: ‘If He delivers us from this, we will surely be among the grateful?’ Say, ‘It is Allah who delivers you from them and from every agony, [but] then you ascribe partners [to Him]’.”²³

Third verse:

“It is He who carries you across land and sea. When you are in the ships, and they sail with them with a favorable wind, rejoicing in it. There upon a tempestuous wind and waves assail them from every side, and they think that they are besieged. They invoke Allah putting exclusive faith in Him, ‘If you deliver us from this, we will surely be among the grateful.’ But when He delivers them, behold, they commit violations on the earth unduly! O mankind! Your violations are only to your own detriment. [These are] the wares of the life of this world; then to Us will be your return, whereat We will inform you concerning what you used to do.”²⁴

Fourth verse:

“When they board the ship, they invoke Allah putting exclusive faith in Him, but when He delivers them to land, behold, they ascribe partners [to Him].”²⁵

“Putting exclusive faith in Him”

means that they become monotheists. Other verses related to this discussion are:

“They ask you to hasten the punishment. Yet were it not for a specified time, the punishment would have surely overtaken them. Surely, it will overtake them suddenly while they are unaware. They ask you to hasten the punishment, and indeed Hell will besiege the faithless.”²⁶

“And when distress befalls you at sea, those whom you invoke besides Him are forsaken. But when He delivers you to land, you are disregarding [of Him]. And man is very ungrateful.”²⁷

“When distress befalls people, they supplicate their Lord, turning to Him in penitence. Then, when He lets them taste His mercy, behold, a part of them ascribe partners to their Lord.”²⁸

Awakening the primordial nature of polytheists

It can be deduced from Qur’anic verses that Allah, the Exalted, uses various means to get rid of delusions and awaken sleeping primordial natures. There are many verses in the Holy Qur’an related to this subject, a few examples of which will suffice to illustrate our assertion.

First verse:

“Say, ‘All praise belongs to Allah, and peace be to His servants whom He has chosen.’ Is Allah better, or the partners they ascribe [to Him]? Is He who created the heavens and the earth, and sends down for you water from the sky, whereby We grow delightful gardens, whose trees you could never cause to grow...?²⁹

What! Is there a god besides Allah? Rather, they are a lot who equate [others with Allah]. Is He who made the earth an abode [for you], and made rivers [flowing] through it, and set firm mountains for it, and set a barrier between two seas...? What! Is there a god besides Allah? Rather, most of them do not know. Is He who answers the call of the distressed [person] when he invokes Him and removes his distress, and makes you the earth’s successors...? What! Is there a god besides Allah? Little is the admonition that you take. Is He who guides you in the darkness of land and sea and who sends the winds as harbingers of His mercy...?

What! Is there a god besides Allah? Exalted is Allah above [having] any partners they ascribe [to Him]. Is He who originates the creation, then He will bring it back, and who provides for you from the sky and the earth...? What! Is there a god besides Allah? Say, ‘Produce your evidence, should you be truthful.’ Say, ‘No one in the heavens or the earth knows the Unseen except Allah, and they do not know when they will be resurrected’.”³⁰

These verses ask man’s primordial nature to judge who is better between the partners (i.e. idols) they ascribe to Allah or Allah Himself?

Once entangled in hardships, idolaters used to conceive that the remover of all distresses was Allah:

“Is He who answers the call of the distressed [person] when he invokes Him and removes his distress, and makes you the earth’s successors...?”

Second verse:

“He draws for you an example from yourselves: do you have among your slaves any partners [who may share] in what We have provided you, so that you are equal in its respect, and you revere them as you revere one another? Thus, do We elaborate³¹ the signs for a people who apply reason.”³²

“Majma‘ al-Bayḥīn” recounts from Sa‘īd bin Jubayr that the reason of revelation of this verse was that idolaters used to accept Allah’s will or call in this way, “Thy will be done, O God. Your only partner is one of your own creatures, who shares in what you have provided.” That is to say, Allah is the owner of His partner and its possessions. The above quoted verse seeks to refute this idolatrous assertion.

It can be deduced from the reason of revelation of this verse that the level of idolatrous thinking was so low that they used to believe that Allah had a partner from among His own creatures! This necessitates that the partner exists independently besides Allah, and the belief that Allah’s partner is one of His own creatures actually means that the presumed partner is actually not a partner. How can these two contradictory beliefs be compromised?

Third verse:

“It is Allah who created you and then He provided for you, then He makes you die, then He will bring you to life. Is there anyone among your partners who does anything of that kind? Immaculate is He and exalted above [having] any partners that they ascribe [to Him]!”³³

This verse initially explains Allah’s deeds, one of which is creation, and the other is providing sustenance, and the third is making mankind die and the fourth is bringing man to life again. Then, it asks the primordial nature of idolaters, “Is there anyone among your partners who does anything of that kind?”

Fourth verse:

He created the heavens without any pillars that you may see, and cast firm mountains in the earth lest it shake with you, and He has scattered in it every kind of animal. And We sent down water from the sky and caused every splendid kind [of plant] to grow in it. This is the creation of Allah. Now, show Me what others besides Him have created. Rather, the wrongdoers are in manifest error.”³⁴

The verse “***This is the creation of Allah. Now show Me what others besides Him have created***” intends to awaken the sleeping inner conscience of idolaters.

Demonstrating the weakness of idols

In some verses of the Holy Qur'an, Allah, the Exalted, intends to clarify the weakness and inability of idols to perform the least of deeds so that the primordial natures of idolaters may awaken and make them stop living in fantasy. In order to complete the previous discussion in this regard, we will quote a few verses:

First verse:

“O mankind! Listen to a parable that is being drawn: indeed those whom you invoke besides Allah will never create [even] a fly even if they rallied to do so! And if a fly should take away something from them, they cannot recover that from it. Feeble is the seeker and the sought!”³⁵

This verse has clearly shown the weakness of idols; how can a being which is helpless against a fly be a partner of Allah, the Omnipotent? There is not the least compatibility between these two partners. Can an explanation more rational than this be found to awaken the sleeping inner conscience of idolaters?

The verse following the above quoted one states:

“They do not regard Allah with the regard due to Him. Indeed, Allah is the All-powerful, All-mighty.”³⁶

Evidently, this verse complains that idolaters did not conceive the greatness of Allah. They equated Him with creatures weaker than a fly despite the fact that He possesses invincible power.

Second verse:

“The parable of those who take guardians instead of Allah is that of the spider that takes a home, and indeed the frailest of homes is the home of a spider, had they but known! Allah indeed knows whatever thing they invoke besides Him, and He is the All-mighty, the All-wise. And We draw these parables for mankind; but no one grasps them except those who have knowledge.”³⁷

In [the book of Qur'anic exegesis entitled] “*Shubbar*”, ‘guardians’ [awliyā] has been interpreted as idols, and it has been said, “They used to take idols as their protectors besides Allah, despite that they are frailer than spiders’ webs, which can be destroyed by a finger.”

An interesting point in the above quoted verse is its assertion that idolatry is a very weak and infirm creed, which is not based on any rational and narrated proof; it is a creed as frail as a spider’s web, which can be destroyed by merely blowing air at it! For instance, when idolaters were asked why they worshipped idols, they used to respond that they were following in the footsteps of their ancestors.

It has thus been written in [the book of Qur'anic exegesis entitled] “*Tafsīr Kishf*”, “If you examine all

kinds of homes one by one, you will find out that the weakest of homes is the spider's web. Likewise, if you enquire into all the world religions, you will find out that idolatry is the most infirm or frailest of them all.

"Had they known" also bears a very interesting point; it denotes that if idolaters had paid heed to their primordial natures, they would have conceived that idolatry is the weakest of creeds, but perhaps it is impossible for them to realize this.

"And We draw these parables for mankind":

In this section of the above quoted verse, Allah states that the goal of drawing these parables is to awaken man's rational faculty.

It has thus been written in *"Tafsīr Shubbar"*, *"But no one grasps them except those who have knowledge"* means thinkers and intellectuals. Idolaters lack knowledge because they do not undertake intellectual endeavor; that is to say, they would have understood the purport of these parables, had they been people of intellectual endeavor. Their lack of understanding is due to their lack of intellectual effort.

Truly, is there a more expressive explanation for awakening the sleeping primordial natures of idolaters than to explain the inability and weakness of idols?!

Third verse:

"Say, 'Invoke them whom you claim [to be gods] besides Allah! They do not control [even] an atom's weight in the heavens or the earth, nor have they any share in [either of] them, nor is any of them³⁸ His supporter'."³⁹

Fourth verse:

"[Only] to Him belongs the true invocation;⁴⁰ and those whom they invoke besides Him do not answer them in any way—like someone who stretches his hands towards water [desiring] that it should reach his mouth, but it does not reach it—and the invocations of the faithless only go awry."⁴¹

*"[Only] to Him belongs the true invocation"*⁴² means worship; that is to say, real worship is a prerogative of Allah because He is the true God and besides Allah, no creature deserves to be worshipped and invoked. Idols are not real, and they do not have the least effect in the existing cosmos. In the above quoted verse, invocation of Allah has been compared with invocation of idols; the former is valid and the latter is invalid.

Other verses in this regard are:

"Those whom you invoke besides Him can neither help you, nor help themselves."⁴³

“Certainly, We had given to Abraham his rectitude before, and We knew him when he said to his father and his people, ‘What are these images to which you keep clinging?’ They said, ‘We found our fathers worshipping them.’ He said, ‘Certainly, you and your fathers have been in manifest error.’ They said, ‘Are you telling the truth,⁴⁴ or are you just kidding?’ He said, ‘Rather, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, who originated them, and I am a witness to this. By Allah, I will devise a stratagem against your idols after you have gone away.’ So, he broke them into pieces—all except the biggest of them—so they might come back to it. They said, ‘Whoever has done this to Our gods?

He is indeed a wrongdoer! They said, ‘We heard a young man speaking ill of them. He is called ‘Abraham.’ They said, ‘Bring him before the people’s eyes so that they may bear witness [against him].’ They said, ‘Was it you who did this to our gods, O Abraham?’ He said, ‘Rather, it was this biggest of them who did it! Ask them, if they can speak.’ Thereat, they came to themselves and said [to one another], ‘Indeed, it is you who are the wrongdoers!’ Then, they hung their heads.

They said, ‘You certainly know that they cannot speak.’ He said, ‘Do you then worship, besides Allah that which cannot cause you any benefit or harm? Fie on you and what you worship besides Allah! Do you not apply reason?’ They said, ‘Burn him, and help your gods, if you are to do anything!’ We said, ‘O fire! Be cool and safe for Abraham!’ They sought to outmaneuver him, but we made them the greatest losers.”⁴⁵

¹. Sūrat al-An‘ām 6:81.

². Sūrat al-An‘ām 6: 100.

³. Sūrat al-An‘ām 6: 136.

⁴. Sūrat al-An‘ām 6: 138.

⁵. Sūrat al-An‘ām 6: 138.

⁶. Sūrat al-An‘ām 6: 139.

⁷. Sūrat al-An‘ām 6: 140.

⁸. Sūrat al-An‘ām 6: 143–144.

⁹. Or ‘those who were before them had lied likewise’, in accordance with an alternate reading. (See al-Zamakhsharī, al-Rāzī, and al-Ṭabrisī).

¹⁰. Sūrat al-An‘ām 6: 1.

¹¹. Sūrat al-Ahqaf 46:4.

¹². Sūrat al-Hajj 22:71.

¹³. Sūrat al-Mu‘minīn 23: 117.

¹⁴. That is, the gods worshipped by the polytheists.

¹⁵. Sūrat al-Zukhruf 43:20–24.

¹⁶. Sūrat al-A‘raf 7:33.

¹⁷. Sūrat al-A‘raf 7:71.

¹⁸. Sūrat al-An‘ām 6:22–24.

¹⁹. Sūrat al-Qasas 28:62.

²⁰. Sūrat Yūnus 10:36.

²¹. Sūrat Yūnus 10:66.

²². Sūrat al-An‘ām 6:49–41.

²³. Sūrat al-An‘ām 6:63–64.

- [24.](#) [Sūrat Yūnus 10:22–23.](#)
- [25.](#) [Sūrat al-‘Ankabūt 29:65.](#)
- [26.](#) [Sūrat al-‘Ankabūt 29:53–54.](#)
- [27.](#) [Sūrat al-‘Isrā’ \(or Banī Isrā’īl\) 17:67.](#)
- [28.](#) [Sūrat al-Rūm 30:33.](#)
- [29.](#) Ellipsis: the omitted phrase here and in the following verses (61–64) is ‘better or the partners they ascribe to Him.’
- [30.](#) [Sūrat al-Naml 27:59–65.](#)
- [31.](#) Or ‘articulate’.
- [32.](#) [Sūrat al-Rūm 30:28.](#)
- [33.](#) [Sūrat al-Rūm 30:40.](#)
- [34.](#) [Sūrat Luqmān 31: 10–11.](#)
- [35.](#) [Sūrat al-Hajj 22:73.](#)
- [36.](#) [Sūrat al-Hajj 22:74.](#)
- [37.](#) [Sūrat al-‘Ankabūt 29:41–43.](#)
- [38.](#) That is, of the people of Mecca.
- [39.](#) [Sūrat Saba’ 34:22.](#)
- [40.](#) Or ‘His is the invitation to the truth’, or ‘He is the true invitation’.
- [41.](#) [Sūrat al-Ra’d 13:14.](#)
- [42.](#) Or ‘His is the invitation to the truth’, or ‘He is the true invitation’.
- [43.](#) [Sūrat al-A’raf 7: 197.](#)
- [44.](#) Or ‘Are you speaking seriously?’
- [45.](#) [Sūrat al-Anbiyā’ 21:52–70.](#)

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